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# **Alumni: Alexia Schulz, MIT Lincoln Laboratory**

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Alexia Schulz

The road from cosmology and plasma physics to counterterrorism was an unexpected journey for Alexia Schulz, who currently works at the federally funded research and development center Lincoln Laboratory that is part of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT LL).

She spent almost three years as a Director's Fellow at the Lab beginning in 2010 with the Nuclear and Particle Physics, Astrophysics and Cosmology group. At that time she concentrated on science but it was a career fair there that led to her current position.

"I submitted my CV in advance of the event and had a phone interview, and after several more opportunities to learn more about what Lincoln did, I decided to make the move," said Schulz.

She now works in cyber operations, seeking to protect network assets and assists law enforcement and others using data to better understand potential terrorist threats.

The common thread between physics and cyber operations: big data and statistics.

"People who can work with large amounts of data—like those within cosmology—can apply those skills to other areas," she said.

In fact, she said, 30 to 40 percent of the people in her group have hard science backgrounds.

One aspect of her work she enjoys is solving real problems that are both difficult and have tangible impact.

“It’s not uncommon to have to rapidly engineer prototypes for almost immediate application,” she said. Turnaround normally takes anywhere from six months to a year. Although she has no current plans to move back to a physics career, she’s glad to work for an organization where that possibility exists, since it isn’t uncommon at MIT LL for the staff to shift focus in their research interests.

“For a long time as a student and postdoc I was moving about every two years,” Schulz said, “it’s reassuring to know I could pursue new passions yet continue to work at MIT LL.”

In looking back on her time at Los Alamos, it was access to the broad range of expertise and a sense of collaborative community that she remembers most. She is also grateful of the support she received from her mentors: Mike Warren (currently a co-founder of Descartes Lab), Daniel Holz (T-2), Gerald Jungman, and Anna Hayes-Sterbenz, the latter three are still with Nuclear and Particle Physics, Astrophysics and Cosmology.

To learn more about Alexia, visit her [LinkedIn page](#).

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